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CLASSICAL THEISM AND THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

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ABSTRACT: This paper provides a critical analysis of the ontological argument for the existence of God, one of the most fascinating and contentious proofs in the history of philosophy and theology. The analysis begins by establishing the argument's contemporary relevance, citing the renewed debate sparked by figures such as Charles Hartshorne and J.N. Findlay. The core of the paper is dedicated to an exposition of Anselm of Canterbury's classical formulation, which defines God as "that than which nothing greater can be conceived" and posits existence as a necessary predicate of such a perfect being. The paper contrasts the ontological argument's claim of logical necessity with the cosmological argument's reliance on factual necessity. Subsequently, a rigorous critique is presented, challenging the argument on several fronts. These include the problematic application of "logical necessity" outside a defined context, the ambiguity and context-dependency of the concept of a "Perfect Being," and the internal contradictions arising from different historical versions of perfection (Platonic, Neo-Platonic, and limitless potentiality). The paper also examines Charles Hartshorne's neoclassical revision, which introduces the concept of a dipolar, changing God. Ultimately, the paper concludes that while the ontological argument fails as a formal proof, it

remains a profound expression of faith, hope, and the human longing for ultimate security and meaning.

Keywords: *Ontological Argument, Classical Theism, Perfect Being, Anselm of Canterbury, Charles Hartshorne, Logical Necessity, Cosmological Argument, Philosophy of Religion.*

INTRODUCTION

The Contemporary Status of The Oncological Argument. No argument for the existence of God has fascinated philosophers and theologians more than the ontological argument. In 1960 a noted philosopher published an article in a professional journal in which he defended this ancient argument. On the surface, the article was first another scholarly piece of work making fts usual contribution to the advance of human understanding. But it generated, a powerful controversy that is still raging. Suddenly the time was ripe for a thoroughgoing debate of the issue. Today, one of the most influential philosophers in theological circles is Charles Hartshorne, More than any other philosopher, he has explored the height and depths of the ontological argument. He defends a revised and up-to-date version of the argument and regards the universe as "God's body.”. Another important contemporary philosopher, J. N-Findlay, had previously argued th0t the oncological argument proves that there could not possibly be & God. Findlay and Hartshorne eventually became for 3 while members of the same faculty at the University of Texas where they were able together to examine some of their points of difference and agreement. The development of debate over the oncological argument has allowed us to shake off some of the poor arguments advanced in the past. To be sure, we cannot predict the future course of a debate over a significant issue. But we may expect that new insights will emerge along the way. Sometimes the unintended insights are of value equal to the major conclusions reached. This is especially true of the debate regarding the ontological argument. For example, Professor Hartshorne argues forcefully that God as Necessary Being not only can enjoy change, but must do it. This is a long way from Aristotle's Unmoved Mover. Another example of the significant side-effects of the debate regarding the ontological argument is this:' the whole concept of eternity has been taken out of the bag, so to

speak, and spread out on the table so that philosophers, theologians, astronomers, and others may examine it.

WHAT DOES "ONTOLOGICAL" MEAN?

The word 'ontological' is based on the Greek word ontos, which means "being". But the ontological argument is concerned with perfect being. This argument often refers to God as G.C.B – the Greatest Conceivable Being. It is assumed that such a secure Being would not be greatly upset if only his initials were used!. Indeed, if there is such a Perfect Being, then anything said of him is likely to be an abbreviation.

While the ontological argument and the cosmological argument overlap in some of their territory, there is one major difference between them. The cosmological argument concedes that it is logically possible that absolutely nothing might have existed. Even God might never have existed. But the ontological argument refuses to make this concession. Instead, it says that there is one Being whose existence is absolutely guaranteed. As was just hinted in the previous chapter, this whole question of whether God might never have existed at all is a very thorny one. But in this chapter, I hope to pull out some of the thorns so that you may look inside the argument and discover why it has fascinated so many profound minds.

ANSELM'S PROOF

Think of the Greatest: Anselm, appointed Archbishop of Canterbury in 1093, developed what he regarded to be a logical proof for the existence of God- First, think of just any finite reality or being: your father, yourself, or the state of California. Second, think of an even greater being: for example, the United States. To be sure, when thinking of the United States; you will not expect to be able to think of every detail of such a great reality. But still you can think of the United States as being great and complex, certainly greater and more complex than either you or I. Keep on thinking until you simply come to the point where you have to say, "Okay, there is a reality that is the greatest of all. If is the. greatest that anyone could possibly conceive of. It isn't Texas California, or the United States. It isn't even the entire globe. with all the nations combined as one humanity. I don't know what to call it. but Surely there's something that is the greatest reality.". This is the direction that Anselm's mind took.

He refers to this greatest reality as simply that reality or being beyond which nothing greater could be conceived. It is the absolute limit to be conceived. It is the greatest conceivable being. Hence, it is perfect because nothing else surpasses it. How do we know that nothing surpasses it?. Anselm's answer-is ingenious. He dares us to go ahead and think of some being or reality that surpasses it. And if we come up with something then we ought to call it the greatest conceivable being. In other words Anselm says that we should not give the title "Perfect Being" to anything that falls short of what can be thought of 35 the absolutely greatest and unsurpassed.

The Greatest Being Would Certainly Exist. Anselm says, in effect, when you conceive of the Greatest Conceivable Being, do not be conservative. Do not leave anything out. This Perfect Being must not be lacking in anything. 3f you knowingly leave something out then Anselm thinks you really are not yet thinking or the Greatest Conceivable Being, you do not yet have the right idea or concept. Now here comes Anselm's logical bomb: He asks, in effect, the following question: Would it not be ridiculous to conceive of this Perfect Being and then leave out one of the most important qualities of all?. And, what is that important quality'11 Anselm's answer is existence. Imagine a Perfect Being with everything except existence How absurd!. Well, if you agree with Anselm, then you have, he believes, just admitted than God exists. For 'God' is simply one of the words given to that being beyond which nothing greater is conceivable.

If It Exists in Your Mind, It Exists in Reality. Anselm knew full well that just because you have in your mind the idea of a million dollars, you do not necessarily have a million dollars in a bank account. A monk challenged Anselm to think of a Perfect Island. I do not know what a perfect island would be to a monk, but his point was this: just because the Perfect Island exists in the mind, that does, not mean that it exists off the coast of Spain or anywhere else outside the imagination. The monk's point is very simple. Just because you can think of a Perfect Being—including his existence—-does not mean that lie therefore exists. In Anselm's time people believed in a lot of things that today ate regarded by many as existing only in the imagination. (Even Thomas, over a century after Anselm. offered numerous arguments supporting "belief in angels) In effect, the monk opposing Anselm said, "'Thinking does not make it so.". But Anselm's reply is relentless. He believes that everything except Perfect Being might

never have existed or might cause to exist in any moment. Hence, to have imperfect beings such as angels or islands in your mind does not mean that they necessarily exist. Anselm might have been thinking at the moment of going with his beautiful charming wife to the monk's perfect Island. But Anselm would have known that this was all mere imagination. The island did not really exist and besides, Anselm had no wife. Many a young man in the throes of romantic passion has exclaimed. "My woman has everything!". But in a cairn moment he would be able to concede that she does, not realty have everything. She is not, after all, Perfect Being-—that Being beyond which nothing greater can be conceived- Sad ;is it may be, the woman lacks all sorts of qualities. Anselm's point is that there is one and only one reality whose nature of necessity is to exist. Arid that is the perfect Being. Everything else may be conceived of as eventually perishing, or even never having come into existence fit all. But Perfect Being must have existence—otherwise there could not even be the idea of a Perfect Being. Anselm believes that the monk already concedes that he has an iota of Perfect Being. The monk even says as much. Thus, Anselm concludes, the very idea of Perfect Being includes the existence of that Being, So, the protesting monk must either give up the idea of Perfect Being (and thus becomes an atheist) or admit that the possession of the idea proves the existence of the Perfect Being.

Anselm's Framework. Those who place Anselm's argument under (he microscope, so to speak, sometimes forget that his thinking was greatly shaped by Plata and St. Augustine. Plato and Augustine held that thoughts ate somehow "participating" in objective reality. Himself greatly influenced by the Platonic tradition, Augustine insisted that whenever the mind apprehends truth, it is already apprehending God to some degree, for God is truth. For Augustine, when the mind knows truth, it knows eternal realities. All knowledge is regarded as in some sense acquaintance with the eternal mind of God. So whether entertaining mathematical ideas or principles of logic, Augustine was, he thought, participating somehow in the mind fo God. It is not surprising, therefore that as a staunch Augustinian, Anselm would assume that in entertaining in our mind the idea of perfect Being, we would be "participating in the mind of God. The idea of Perfect Being more than any other idea would presumably put us in contact with the reality of God's eternal existence. I will not dwell on

Anselm's Augustinian framework because the ontological argument is thought by many to be an important argument on its own grounds.

God Had to Exist: When studying the cosmological argument, you saw that God was regarded as infinite, indestructible, and unchanging. However, those embracing the cosmological argument admit that the nonexistence of God is conceivable. They argue only that if God exists, then his existence had no beginning and will have no end. The cosmological argument is supposed to show that in fact God does exist, not that he must exist. The cosmological argument concedes that "it is logically possible (i.e., conceivable) that nothing exists or every has existed, including God.". By contrast, the ontolgocil argument asserts that it is inconceivable that God might never have existed. When defenders of this argument say that God is Necessary Being, they mean that his existence is absolutely necessary. God had to exist because it is the very nature of a Perfect Being to exist. Existence is regarded as just as much a quality of God as is his love or power. To say that God might not have existed is like saying that he might have lacked love, mercy, power, knowledge, or justice. When we ask, "Why should there be something rather than nothing?", the defenders fo the ontological argument believe that the cosmological argument cannot handle this question. True, the cosmological argument says that the world exists because God exists. But this does not answer the question as to why God should exist. The ontological argument, on the other hand, answers by saying that it is the very nature of Perfect Being to exist.

Logical Necessity and Factual Necessity: The cosmological argument says that if we keep asking why something exists, we finally come to God. There the question stops, for God is the ultimate answer as to why anything is caused to be what it is. But suppose we say that the universe is simply the brute ultimate fact which, while it might not have been, nevertheless happens to be?. Well, the cosmological argument will not permit this, because it says that only God can be the brute ultimate fact that cannot be explained but nevertheless exists. According to this cosmological argument, God enjoys factual necessity. This raises the question: Necessity for what?. The cosmological argument answers that God is absolutely necessary to the World's existence. Furthermore, to speak of the factual necessity of God is, in addition, to call attention to the fact that his existence depends on nothing outside himself. But the

ontological argument presses even further the issue of necessity. Those adhering to this argument are disturbed by the thought that God might never have been. They receive no comfort in the reply that nothing else would have existed if God had not existed. Hence, the ontological argument contends that God has not only factual necessity, but logical necessity. To say that he exists of logical necessity is to deny that God might never have existed. The logical necessity of God entails that the thought of his nonexistence is contradiction. The cosmological argumende5t is criticized for having fallen into self-contradiction. You might feel like asking, “Why does the defender of the ontological argument keep pressing his point? Why cannot he simply accept God’s existence and let it go at that?”. Well, something in the back of his mind keeps disturbing him. What worries him is the chilling though that God exists as a matter of pure chance or accidents! . you recall that classical theists find it to be a terrible though that the universe might simply be here as an accident. And those who embrace the ontological argument are not about to allow that God might simply be here as a matter of pure chance or accident. Why, if this were so, then what is to prevent another accident – the utter disappearance of God and the whole of reality!. There is only one way out, Declare the existence of Cod Co be a logical necessity, Only then can believers be assured that God's existence will not accidentally fall into the abyss of nothingness.

PROBLEMS FOR THE ONTOLOGICAL ARGUMENT

The Problem of Logical Necessity. It will be useful to look more critically at the ontologies argument. Any sensitive person can understand the human anxiety motivating this ancient argument, fox most of us wish for deep and abiding security. We do not wish to bring "The eternal note of sadness in". The ontological argument is, however, misguided in thinking that "logical necessity" leally means something in the indefinite context in which it is used. What the argument is designed to do is to make an absolute distinction between God's necessary existence and his possible existence. But it fails to make clear that "necessity" and "possibility" do not mean anything without a definite context or selling- You cannot toll whether something follows necessarily unless you know what its setting, permits. The number 4 follows necessarily from 2, times 2- The reason is that the mathematical content in which this

formula is -jet will not permit another answer. On the other hand, it is Only possibly, not necessarily, true that the trees I planted yesterday will be alive at this date next year Why is this so?. Because the empirical setting in which I planted the trees will not allow anything other than the possibility that they will grow. To be sure, I might be able to increase the odds in my favor by doing some things that the empirical contest will permit. But if asked "Will your trees be. alive next year'^ I cannot say with logical necessity that they will.

Now let us look back to the ontological argument The point to be made is that the question, 'Is it necessary that God should exist?" is not a genuine question. Like a mirage, it looks real hut it is not. Why? Because it presupposes something that it cannot presuppose, which is to fall into self-contradiction. The illicit presupposition, very simply, is the presupposition of a context ot netting for God. Classical theism will not allow an eternal context for Cod. Without realizing what they are doing, the ontological argument defenders are really asking the following question; "What will God's setting or contest permit? Will it not permit a logically necessary being, namely, God?". No one can answer this question because classical theism rejects any established contest for God- And even if there -were such a context or setting, the whole problem would spill out again. For we could then ask about this wider setting or context. Is its exis tence- logically necessary?. Unfortunately, in order to answer this question we would have to look for still another setting: the setting of the setting and so on throughout infinity.

It is therefore misleading to speak of God's existence as either logically necessary or accidental. Neither of these words has any meaning apart from a setting. When the cosmological and ontological arguments are advanced, their defenders certainly do not intend to rake for granted any setting at all for their God. If they did take one for granted, then they would be talking not about an independent Being but rather about a dependent being. A dependent being must have setting and condition. These determine what is necessary in order for the dependent being: to exist. Now if there is a Being who is absolutely independent, then there can be no reason for his existence. There can be no reason for some actual being or quality until there is already a setting of at least one other actual being with qualities. This is not to say that if there is a totally

independent Being, then his existence is unreasonable. No, it would be neither reasonable nor unreasonable. It might he called nonrational—which is to say that its existence would be neither rational nor irrational God's existence would be just an ultimate brute fact. Or if there were no God, then the universe would be just an ultimate tact. Such a universe requires no God. To ask for its origin as a whole would be to presuppose that: it needs an origin or that it needs a context. Nontheistic naturalism is the view that nature or the universe exists as ultimate reality and that the idea of a creator of the universe i& an unnecessary piece of mythology. To ask for the origin of the universe as a whole is like asking for the so of the universe. Of course. Jews, Christians, and Muslims have often thought of God as male. But inasmuch as “he” seems now to have no distinguishing parts or qualities that are conspicuously male, the tendency to God as male has been repressed and treated as an early expression of Hebrew male chauvinism flowing from the vain imagination of patriarchs. In the nineteenth century, the pope increased the status of the Virgin Mary, which appears to many people to be a humorously tokenist ploy. It would seem that name is less sexist than some of the male theologians and cardinals would have their God to be.

What Is Perfect Being? You perhaps recall from earlier in this chapter the steps we took in trying to think of Perfect Being. You knew that neither you nor your father, neither the "United States nor the whole globes could be designated as the Perfect Being. Yet there is a very serious question as to whether it even makes sense to talk of 3 perfect Being at ail. We tan speak of a perfect high jump at the track meet, or a perfect day for a picnic. But perfect Being seems to be too all-inclusive to be meaningful. Only within a given context or setting may something be called perfect. Also it must measure up to certain standards or expectations. But asking for a Perfect Being without any limit or setting is like asking for a perfect perfect. Or a perfect perfect perfect—and so on, A perfect adjective is one that more exactly fit's the expectations of a given sentence than does any other. A perfect day depends on what we want or need. For a farmer, a perfect day might be one of steady rain because his crops need the water- His children might think the perfect day is ii hot sunny day for going swimming If you want to go fishing, then 3 perfect day will be moderately warm and still, whereas if you want to fly a kite you will think that the perfect day should be windy.

Anselm says that God is the greatest conceivable being. To be the greatest Jiving swimmer is to be able to swim farther than any other Living person and to perform in an unsurpassed way otter feats to be listed under the heading of swimming. The greatest borne-run hitter is the one who bits the most home runs under proper and official conations. But what does one do in order to be the all-rime greatest being?. What activities count as "being" activities?. Obviously Anselm's God is not the greatest basketball player, safecracker, dentist, Russian diplomat, house painter, or catfish. Unless God j's everything (pantheism), then God is not the greatest rose or Iowa bog hog, (If God were everything, he would also be the worst rose.). The point is that there does not seem to be universal perfection Or greatness. But that is what (he desire for Perfect Being seems to demand. Unfortunately, there is no clear standard for determining when a being is perfect. However, it is very likely that religion begins, not with a desire for something as vague' as Perfect Being, but with much more definite needs and desires. In this own defense of the ontological argument, Professor Norman Malcolm thinks that that the sense of guilt and the desire for forgiveness are some of the psychological roots of the ontologies! argument for God. Feeling themselves to be guilty beyond all measure, people Lave sometimes longed for a Being whose power and willingness to forgive is beyond all measure. Hence the longing for the perfect forgiver. Buddha and countless other people have seen how impermanent things are all about them, What Buddha sought; was perfect serenity in the fate of impermanence. He wanted a Nirvana of perfect bliss. Some Christians have characterized the life of God as perfect bliss.

Versions of Perfection: Classical theism has its roots iu at least three versions of what perfection is unfortunately, these versions often stand in contradiction to one another.

(1) For some of the ancient Creek philosophers, perfection is understood to be an intelligible and limited form. Perfection in this sense is order and structure in contrast to limitless chaos and anarchy. If perfection were incomplete and limitless, then it would, presumably not be intelligible and comprehensible to the mind. For Plato and others like him- perfection is the very opposite of unstructured and limitless being. Perfection is not the whole of reality but is to be distinguished from the mass of chaotic motions.

(2) On the other hand, the Neo-Platonic tradition sees perfection as the all-encompassing reality which is somehow drama together into one total and simple unit. Unlike Plato's perfection, however, the Neo-Platonic perfection is not •comprehensible. It transcends the powers of human intelljgcaoe.

(3) There is still a third version of perfection. It stresses the realm of limitless possibilities that can be actualized. This realm may be seen as an infinity of possible worlds in the divine mind. According to this version of perfection, God contains an endless supply of resources and possibilities. He is adequate because he is an infinity.

Without going into great detail on points, of conflict among those three versions of perfection, I wish merely to note that the first one stresses order, form, and limits, whereas the last one stresses limitlessness. Now dearly, a Being who has no limits as to what ho will actualize cannot be regarded as supremely good, tor he" will make do value judgments. To have an infinity of possibilities is possibly to be a greatly evil being, depending on what possibilities are actualized. But to actualize only some potentialities is to suppress or limit certain others. Moral and aesthetic perfection must be discriminating and evaluative—hence placing limits on the infinite realm of possibilities.

As for the Neo-Platonic unity, there is no essential reason why unity must be superior to plurality. It all depends upon the needs, interests, and purposes to be served. For some purposes, unity in a certain area is to be- preferred, whereas other needs and desires require plurality and diversity. Total unity per se has been designated as "perfection," hut them is no convincing reason for accepting this designation. If we take perfection to mean total, all-inclusive unity, then the God of classical theism must be judged as imperfect. Ibis is because the universe is regarded as outside God’s own being and is not a part of his unity. Classical theism regards God to be a unity, but not an all-inclusive unity. If God creates a world outside himself, he is limited in the sense that be does not include it in his own being. On the other hand, if an all-inclusive Being cannot create a world outside of himself, he is limited in power. Hence, God may be regarded as either perfect or imperfect, depending on what version of perfection we use as the standard of judgment.

It might be argued that God must reveal to us which version of perfection is to be used as the general standard. The trouble with this argument is that we would need to know whether this alleged God is really God. Even assuming for the sake of argument that a very powerful Being truth reveal to us some version of perfection, how could we know that this powerful Being is God?. He might be simply a powerful almighty Being, but he could not be God unless he were perfect—at least according to those who profess classical theism. It is possible that an all-powerful Being might wish to offer his own version of perfection. But why should we accept it?. If we accept it because he is all-powerful, &en w£ have unwittingly subscribed to the version of perfection that simply defines 'perfection' as -might or absolute power!. This is indeed another version of perfection. But there is no convincing reason for accepting it, although there may be some threatening reasons, That is, if we do not accept it we might suffer some of the ill effects that the moat powerful Being might inflict upon us. Those people who worship power per se would be impressed with this display of force, but the morally sensitive would abhor it.

Change and Perfect Being. Anselm takes for granted that any change in God would render him less than Perfect Being. In the previous chapter, I tried to show that it is self-contradictory to think of God as both a living personal Being and a changeless Being, Perfect Being as conceived of by Anselm is sometimes regarded as static. But for Charles Hartshorne: God is dipolar. That is, while changeless in some respects, in other respects he undergoes change and is the most dynamic and changing being of all. Anselm wrote his famous Proslogion in 1078. Since that time the ontological argument has taken many turns and received various amendments and qualifications. Perhaps the most note-worthy qualification is the one made by Charles Hartshorne, Like Anselm, he argues that God's existence is logically necessary (although sometimes Hartshorne is not consistent on this point). He parts company with Anselm On the matter of God's qualities. Hartshorne contends that while God necessarily exists, nevertheless riot everything about God is necessary. In other words, some of God's life is contingent. That is, it might have been otherwise had God so chosen or had other aspects of his own life been different. This suggests that God has an internal environment that influences the quality of his life. Indeed, Hartshorne postulates that certain aspects of God's "being will forever be changing. But this is not regarded as a

threat to divine perfection, for no one surpasses God. IE he surpasses himself, he is still the most perfect being. Here is another example of the many ways the words 'perfect' or perfection' may be used. For Hartshorne, a Perfect Being must be capable of growth and development. If God is indeed personal, then he must be responsive, sensitive, and therefore capable of gaining in new experiences. But there are many classical theists who cannot use the word 'perfect' to describe such a self-surpassing being. For these theists, perfection demands absolutely no change at all.

Unfortunately, there is no way to "prove" that one version or vision of perfection is the true one, whereas the others are fakes or frauds. We can only point oat the great difficulty that emerges whenever people try to say what Perfect Being "really" is. Indeed, its ontological argument seems to be an excellent example of how language is sometime pushed up to the edge. Anselm himself confesses that Perfect Being in beyond our comprehension. Two decades ago a large convention of Buddhists described Nirvana as that state of neither existence nor nonexistent Like Anselm in his ontological argument, these Buddhists were Bulking if the edge of language. Anselm fails to prove the existence of the Cod of classical theism, and Hartshorne fails to prove that This God of neoclassical theism exists of logical necessity. What has been shown is that poets, lovers, and certain kinds of religious believers are willing to say that their highest visions, dreams, and expectations will not be disappointed that if they throw their rope across the chasm, it will somehow take hold on the other side. As Anselm made quite clear, the ontological argument is motivated by the heart's longings. It is the expression of a faith born of desperation and swelling with hope and expectation. Sometimes increased expectations will bring into existence certain relationships and experiences that would not have existed before. The believer in classical theism holds that faith create the possibility of "experiencing God ". But there are many others who hold that no amount of mere finite human faith and hope can conjure up or create a God who simply does not exist. What faith find hope can sometimes do, however, is open human beings up to new experiences, relationships, and dimensions of living and knowing that previously were beyond their ability to conceive. The theist contends that there are more riches and wonders in Cod than are dreamt of in philosophy. The nontheistic naturalist replies that there are more richer and wonders in the universe than are dreamt of in theology The theist rejoins that the universe would not be here

had not God created it. The naturalist answers that the concept of Gad is itself a product of the imagination of human beings, who in turn £re a product of the universe. In either view—theism or naturalism—the human creature stands in a context that he merely receives and did not invent; but to which he may add some human dement. The fundamental question, then, has to do with how the finite creature is to relate to this vast and wondrous context in which lie lives and moves and has his being.

Conclusion

The ontological argument, from its classical formulation by Anselm to its neoclassical revisions by Hartshorne, represents a bold and intellectually captivating attempt to bridge the gap between concept and reality. This paper has demonstrated that while the argument has sparked centuries of profound philosophical debate, its logical foundations are ultimately unstable. The core critiques identified herein—namely, the misapplication of "logical necessity" to a being without a context, the inherent ambiguity in defining a universal "Perfect Being," and the contradictory nature of historical versions of perfection—collectively undermine its claim as a deductive proof. Anselm's proof fails to move convincingly from an idea in the mind to an entity in reality, while Hartshorne's modifications, though innovative, cannot definitively establish the logical necessity of a dipolar God.

What the argument does achieve, however, is significant. It reveals the depth of the human desire for a secure and ultimate reality, a being whose existence is not a mere accident but a necessity. It is an expression of faith seeking understanding, motivated by what the paper identifies as "the heart's longings." In the end, the ontological argument does not resolve the debate between theism and naturalism. Rather, it pushes language and logic to their limits, illustrating that the question of ultimate reality may transcend formal proof, remaining a fundamental query into how humanity relates to the vast context in which it exists.

Recommendations

Based on the analysis presented in this paper, the following avenues for future research are recommended:

1. **Cross-Cultural Philosophical Analysis:** The paper briefly alludes to Buddhist conceptions of Nirvana. A dedicated comparative study could explore the linguistic and conceptual parallels and divergences between the Western ontological argument for a "Perfect Being" and Eastern philosophical arguments concerning ultimate, necessary realities (e.g., Brahman in Hinduism, the Tao in Taoism).

2. **Psychological and Anthropological Inquiry:** The paper notes Norman Malcolm's suggestion that the argument is rooted in human feelings of guilt and the need for forgiveness. Further research from psychological and anthropological perspectives could investigate the deep-seated human needs—for security, permanence, and meaning—that make the ontological argument so perennially compelling, regardless of its logical validity.

3. **The Ontological Argument and Contemporary Metaphysics:** An examination of how the argument's concepts of "necessity," "contingency," and "existence" can be re-evaluated in light of 21st-century developments in metaphysics, modal logic, and even theoretical physics (e.g., multiverse theory) could provide new insights into its structure and potential relevance.

4. **A Deeper Analysis of Hartshorne's Dipolar Theism:** While this paper introduces Hartshorne's revisions, a more focused study could explore the theological and philosophical consequences of his dipolar concept. This would involve assessing how a being that is both changing and unchanging, necessary and contingent, addresses classical theological problems beyond the scope of this paper, such as the problem of evil and divine omniscience.

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